

# THE VOICE IN THE FOG

Drawing by A. B. Wenzel

## CHAPTER XVIII

SUGAR, coffee, and spices! Thomas dipped his pen into the inkwell and went to work. Were all American fathers mad? To condone an affront like this! He could not understand these Americans. He had approached Killigrew with far more courage than the latter suspected. Thomas had read that here men still shot each other on slight provocation. Sugar, coffee, and spices. . . . São Paulo and the valorization committee. . . . 10,000,000 bags! . . . What should he do? Whither should he turn? To have offered that affront—for nothing! Kitty, whom he revered above all women save one, his mother! . . . Sugar, coffee, and spices. Rio No. 7, 7½ to 13½ cents. Leaks in the roasting business. . . . Apologize? On his knees, if need be! Caught like a rat in a trap—done for—at the end of his rope! Why hadn't he taken to his heels when he had the chance? Gone at once to New York and sent for his belongings? . . . Sugar, coffee, and spices. . . . The pen slipped from his fingers, and he laid his head on his arms. Monumental ass!

Up suddenly, alert eyed. There was a telephone booth in the hall. This he sought noiselessly. He remained hidden in the booth for as long as twenty minutes. Then he emerged, wiping the perspiration from his forehead. For the time being he was saved. But he was very miserable.

Sugar, coffee, and spices again. Doggedly he resumed the transcription, adding, deducting, comparing. He heard a slight noise by the portière, and raised his eyes. Kitty stood there like a picture in a frame: pale, calm of eye.

He was on his feet quickly. "Miss Killigrew, I apologize for my unwarranted rudeness. I did not mean it as you thought I did," which would have made any other woman furious.

"I knew it," said Kitty to herself. "You wanted an excuse to run away. All my conjectures are true. I believe I have you, Mr. Thomas, right in the hollow of my hand." To Thomas, however, she was a presentment of cold and silent indignation.

He blundered on. "You have all been so kind to me. I am sorry. I am also quite ready to stay or go, whichever you say."

"We shall say no more about it," she replied coldly; turned on her trim little heels, and went out into the rose gardens, where she found fault with the head gardener, and on to the stables, where she rated the head groom for not exercising her favorite mount, and back to the villa, where she upset the cook by ordering a hearty breakfast which she could not eat—and all the time striving to smother her generous impulses and the queer little thrills that stirred in her heart.

Guests began to arrive a little before luncheon. A handsome yacht joined Killigrew's in the offing. Laughter and music began to be heard about the villa.

Thomas took his documents and retired to his room, hoping they would forget all about him. He had luncheon there. About four o'clock he looked out of the window toward the beach. They were in bathing, half a dozen young men and women. The diving raft bobbed up and down. Only yesterday she had tried to teach him how to swim. After all, he was only a bally haberdasher's clerk: he would never be anything more than that!

More guests for dinner, which Thomas also had in his room, despite Killigrew's protests. The villa would be filled for a whole week, and a merry dance he would have to avoid the guests.

At nine, just as he was on the point of going to bed, the second man knocked for admittance.

"Miss Killigrew wishes you to come aboard the visiting yacht at ten, Sir."

"Offer Miss Killigrew my excuses. I am very tired."

"Miss Killigrew was decided, Sir. Her father's orders. He wishes you to meet his resident partner in Rio Janeiro. Mr. Killigrew and Mr. Savage will be in the smokeroom forward, Sir."

"Very well. Tell Miss Killigrew that I shall come aboard."

"Thank you, Sir. The motorboat will be at the

jetty at nine-thirty, Sir." The servants about the Killigrew homes understood Thomas's position. They had known young Honorables who had served as private secretaries.

A formal command! There was no way of escaping it. Resignedly Thomas got into his evening clothes. They might smile at his pumps, the hang of his coat; but there would be no question over the correctness of his collar and cravat. He was very bitter against the world, and more especially against Thomas Webb, late of Hodman, Pelt & Co., "haberdashers to H. H. the Duke of" and so forth and so on.

All the way down to the motorboat his new pumps sang, "Fool—fool! Rotter—rotter!" He climbed the yacht's ladder, and ran into Kitty and her guests, exactly as she had prearranged he should.

"Mr. Webb," she said; and immediately began introducing him, leaving Sir Henry Monckton till the last. A cluster of lights made the spot as bright as day.

Thomas bowed politely, and Sir Henry smiled amiably.

"Mr. Killigrew is in the smoking room?" Thomas inquired.

"Yes."

Thomas bowed again, indirectly toward the guests, and walked away. Sir Henry commented on the beauty of the night.

And Kitty caught the gasp between her teeth, lest it should be heard. Fog!

## CHAPTER XIX

RATHER hot for this time of day," volunteered Sir Henry, sliding into the Morris chair at the side of Thomas's desk and dangling his legs over the arm.

"Yes, it is," agreed Thomas, folding a sheet of paper and placing the little ivory elephant paperweight upon it.

"Rippin' doubles this morning. You ought to go into the game. Do you a lot of good."

"I didn't know you played."

"Don't. Watch."

Thomas's gaze was level and steady.

Sir Henry laughed easily and sought his monocle. He fumbled about the front of his coat and shirt. "By Jove! Lost my glass. Wonder I can see anything."

Outside, on the veranda, the two men could see the cluster of women, of which Kitty was the most animated flower. Voices carried easily.

"Ah—what do you think of these—ah—Americans?" asked Sir Henry, as one compatriot to another, leaning toward the desk.

"I think them very kindly, very generous people; at least, those I have met. Have you not found them so?"

"Quite so. I am enjoying myself immensely." Sir Henry swung about in the chair, his back to the veranda.

Thomas loosened his negligée linen collar.

"Ah, really!" drifted into the room. Sir Henry, sleepily eying Thomas, only heard the voice; he did not see, as Thomas did, the action and gesture that accompanied the phrase. Kitty had put something into her eye, squinted, and twisted an imaginary something a few inches below her dimpled chin. It was a hoidenish trick; but Kitty had enacted it for Sir Henry's benefit. The women shouted with laughter. Sir Henry turned in time to see them troop into the gardens. He turned again to Thomas, to find a grin upon that man's face.

"Miss Killigrew is rather an unusual young person," was Sir Henry's comment.

"Uncommon," replied Thomas, scrutinizing the point of his pen.

"For my part, I prefer 'em clinging." Sir Henry rose.

"Rotter!" breathed Thomas. He rearranged his papers, crackling them suggestively.

"Picnic this afternoon. Going along?" asked Sir Henry, pausing by the portières.

"Really, I am not a guest here: I am only private secretary to Mrs. Killigrew. If they treat me as a human being, it is because they believe that charity should not play in grooves."

"Ah! We are all open to a little charity."

"That's true enough. Good morning."

"Beggar!" murmured Sir Henry as he let the portières fall behind him.

"Blighter!" muttered Thomas, staring malevo-

lently at the empty doorway. He would be glad when Mr. and Mrs. Crawford and the artist came down. Forbes was a chap you could get along with anywhere, under any conditions.

SOMETIME later Kitty came in. She crossed immediately to the desk. As Thomas looked up, she smiled at him. It was the first smile of the kind he had witnessed coming in his direction since before that blunder on the tennis courts.

"I found Sir Henry's monocle, Mr. Webb. Will you be so kind as to give it to him?"

"Yes, Miss Killigrew." Absently he raised the monocle and squinted through it. "Why, it's plain glass!" he exclaimed.

"So it is," replied Kitty, with a crooked smile. "And I dare say so are most of the monocles we see. A silly affectation, don't you think so?"

He was instantly up in arms. The monocle was a British institution, and he would as soon have denied the divine right of Kings as question an Englishman's right to wear what he pleased in his eye.

"It was originally designed for a man whose left

eye was weaker than the right, notice them over there."

"I have often wondered when their noses itch."

"Doubtless they scratch them." Kitty's laughter bubbled.

Her hand reached out, then dropped. "Thomas, what have you sapphire?" Urgent as she crushed it back; for deep in her to believe in Thomas, wanted only a mad wager such as he accept, and see to the end. The slightest doubt in her mind. Henry were the two men who curb that foggy night in London the necklace, and the other had carry it six months in America to its owner. The Nana Sabab to a real thief, who had known days and, conscience stricken, Great Britain was an empty knew. They wagered for and ceivable thing that had its depe

That first night on board the came to her cabin in the dark, sl voice. In the light the activity the keenness of the ear, but in found the chord. For days she consciously waiting to hear one voices; and Thomas's had come words "Æneid" and "Enid" had sound between them that Kitty



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